

“An Englishman born and bred, almost”

Identity and Belonging in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

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Abstract

This thesis aims to shed light on the much discussed topic of identity and belonging. Through a close reading of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, I focus on how the development of identity is portrayed in the novel and argue that this development differs from 1st generation immigrants to 2nd generation immigrants and is ever-changing. I explore how identities are shaped and function, with special reference to characters who grow up with Indian culture in an English environment. The main focus will be on the characters representing the 1st and 2nd generation immigrants, but I will also look at how the development of identity is shaped with regard to the non-immigrant perspective. Kureishi's works present debatable subjects both individually and collectively in relation to the differences in culture, especially with regard to sexuality and masculinity. These subjects are all presented through the theory of Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

There comes a time in a person`s life when one discovers that the world is not just the familiar setting in one`s hometown, there is so much to discover and see. This happened to me when I got the chance to work as a trainee teacher in Africa for a couple of months. The small town girl was suddenly surrounded by a whole new setting. After having been given the opportunity to see a completely different way of living, I decided to move to England to study. My core subject was multiculturalism. Ever since that time, the topic of multiculturalism and the feeling of belonging has caught my attention. More so as the years have gone by and I travelled the world to see how people lived and to experience various cultures. This world also opened up a whole new type of books to me. The literature from the postcolonial era has, of course, been a favorite. It was also during my time in England that I stumbled upon Hanif Kureishi. One of his novels stood out: *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

There are several reasons for why I find this book so fascinating. First of all, it tells the story of a family who in many ways are completely different from what one considers a traditional English family. The way Kureishi portrays the family and characters is truly funny. Second of all, the feeling of belonging, or rather not belong, is not as alien to me as one would expect. The feeling of standing with a foot in two types of culture is something I have witnessed watching my immigrant friends grow up here in Norway. Today I am the one who is trying to adapt to a situation where I have one foot in the Norwegian culture, and the other in an Albanian one. Being in this situation myself, and reading the novel now makes it even

funnier as I can relate to some of the difficulties that can arise from being caught between two cultures.

By using this novel as a basis for my thesis, I hope to gain more knowledge of how it feels to be torn between two cultures, and how this is part of shaping your identity and the feeling of belonging. After working as a teacher for a few years, I also find this topic relevant for my career in the years to come, as pupils/students who might find themselves in a similar situation are increasing.

“England’s decrepit. No one believes anything...England’s a nice place if you’re rich, but otherwise it’s a fucking swamp of prejudice, class confusion, the whole thing.”(256)

Hanif Kureishi’s novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, is a life memoir of experiences that human beings endure whenever they go to a new location and want to be accepted by the hosting people of that particular nation. The plot shows how people undergo a sort of rite of passage in order to be accepted by the country. The rite exemplifies itself as a formal admission to a certain way of life in the community in question. Nonetheless, the contemporary society has changed considerably due to civilization, globalization and its cause-effects and the implications of liberal democracies.

Blending of cultures is one poignant and delicate topic in British society, and has been met by a lot of skepticism and political criticism.¹ In February 2011, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, argued that the national identity of the United Kingdom should be stronger, in order to prevent people from turning to extremism. In his eyes, state multiculturalism has failed: "We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel

¹ Stuart Hall., " Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in Padmini Mongia (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996).

they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values."² The collective identity in the UK has been weakened. The Prime Minister received a storm of criticism because of this. However, it is clear that he is very much against the way the politics of multiculturalism has been practiced in Britain.

Another person who feels strongly about multiculturalism, but has problems with the representation of it, is Hanif Kureishi. In an article in *The Guardian* from 2005 he explains what effective multiculturalism is:

...not a superficial exchange of festivals and food, but a robust and committed exchange of ideas...When it comes to teaching the young, we have the human duty to inform them that there is more than one book in the world, and more than one voice, and that if they wish to have their voices heard by others, everyone else is entitled to the same thing.³

In other words, tolerance. Kuresihi depicts this tolerance, and the Prime Minister`s segregated communities, in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The novel is furthermore about the ever-changing sense of class. Karim as a protagonist is an example of how culture and particularly race affect class. Karim depicts himself as “an Englishman, born and bred, almost” (3).

Without a doubt, both the immigrants and the host country have their own frame of mind and personal convictions with respect to multicultural and initiation issues, and how to create equality between these two social groups. There have been many attempts at tracing, retaining and even replanting one`s roots. It catches one`s attention that across all cultures, there seems to be an urge to closely guard what they define as their cultures and practices, at times going

²The official site of the British Prime Minister`s Office, “PM`s speech at Munich Security Conference” <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference/>.

³Hanif Kureishi, “The Carnival of Culture” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/aug/04/religion.uk>.

to great lengths to trace the origin of their roots. Albeit, it can also be noted that Karim`s cognizance of `Englishness` and his detachment about his ethnic upbringing can be termed as eccentric by critics such as Helberg.

Nevertheless, it could be contended that whereas Karim distinguishes his Indian individuality as a personal advantage to be created at will, the author expresses the view that ethnicity is not just something which can be effortlessly discharged. Kureishi reveals that essentially, every human being has a principal right to his/her own particular cultural background. This can be perceived as ignoring the fact that culture is actually social in nature.

The Buddha of Suburbia

“Naughty boy, bad language”

The Buddha of Suburbia is Hanif Kureishi`s unruly, naked and veracious novel which was written in 1990, but the story is set in the early seventies London. This was a period consisting of political change and racial bigotry. The reader follows the 17 year old protagonist, Karim Amir, and his search for identity and inner peace. Karim is a half-English and half-Indian teenager who struggles to find his place in the world and to discover who he is. This quest is not made easier by his father, who also seems to have some sort of identity crisis. His father, Haroon, represents the first generation immigrants in the novel. He has been stuck in a world he hates for too long, both his work and his marriage are bothering him. He decides to get involved with Eva, who shares his passion for Buddhism and Eastern philosophy. He becomes “the Buddha of suburbia”. The reason why Karim accepts all of this is his crush on Eva`s son Charlie. This is where the novel really becomes the “the coming of age” book truly

is. Karim searches for sexual companionship with anyone who is interested, whether it is boys or girls.

Before I knew it, we were passing a public toilet beside the park and her hand was pulling on mine. As she tugged me towards it and I inhaled the urine, shit and disinfectant cocktail I associated with love, I just had to stop and think. I didn't believe in monogamy or anything old like that, but my mind was still on Charlie and I couldn't think of anyone else, not even Jammie. (55)⁴

Karim's father does not approve of his son's sexual desire towards men, but has nothing to say when Karim finds out that he has an affair with Eva. The reader gets to follow the family of both Haroon and his brother, Anwar. The restless offsprings who are bored with suburban life crave excitement. The problem of race is portrayed in two different ways: Karim, whose appearance marks him as foreign, but whose upbringing is very English, and Jamila, whose parents are both Pakistani, but as she has only experienced English culture, she has become very independent and the idea of an arranged marriage is out of the question.

The thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it. (53)

Hanif Kureishi has at times used his own life as a copy, and has admitted that *The Buddha of Suburbia* is, to some extent, an autobiographical novel. After reading and learning about the author, some comparisons can be made. Both Karim and Kureishi grew up in the suburbs, had an Indian father and an English mother. According to Kureishi, he did not live the experimental life that we read about, he found himself to be sitting in his room listening to music most days. In an interview with Hirsh Sawhney he says,

⁴ Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Faber and Faber, 2009). I will be referring to this version throughout the thesis and page numbers will be included in parenthesis in the text itself.

To make a story, you need something dramatic. But the drama in my family was very slow. We'd stay at home and we were together and we'd love one another and watch TV together. That's not a novel. So to make a novel, you throw a bomb in it. You say, "What would happen if...?" The autobiography thing is much more tenuous than you would think. The *Buddha* really began to work when I stopped writing about my real family and began to make up another family.⁵

So in short, *The Buddha of Suburbia* canvass as human behavior, the search for identity and how the choices we make affect those around us.

About Hanif Kureishi

"We who are liberals whirl in a meaningless vertigo of doubt all the time, but if you're religious you know where you're going all the time. I'd love that."⁶

Hanif Kureishi, born in 1954, is a prominent filmmaker, novelist and writer. Over time, he has been able to write on several topics including sexuality, immigration, and racism among many others. Through these writings, Kureishi has been able to establish himself as a famous British writer. This, probably, is the reason he has been included by *The Times* amongst the top British Writers since 1994, and has won several awards in the process. Remarkably, Kureishi's writings started in the 1970's with him being reputed as a pornographic writer for pseudonyms such as *Karim* and *Antonia French*. In 1985, he wrote the critically acclaimed *My Beautiful Laundrette* which centered on a gay Pakistani boy. *My Beautiful Laundrette* is reported to have won the Best Screenplay Award in New York as well as an Academy Award nomination for Best Screenplay in London. It was soon after this, that

⁵In Conversation, "Hanif Kureishi with Hirsh Sawhney," <http://brooklynrail.org/2006/07/books/hanif-kureishi-with-hirsh-sawhney>.

⁶The Guardian, "Did I Say That?" <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/aug/02/hanif-kureishi-quotes>

Kureishi was inspired to write *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The reception for this book was overwhelmingly positive as it ended up winning the Whitbread Award for being the best first novel. It was said that the prize aimed to honour a writer who defined the real truth of people's lives and society. Also, the novel was made into a BBC television series.

It is worth mentioning that in spite of Kureishi's success in the world of play-writing and book-writing, his works have faced a myriad of controversies, both from the public and his own family. His sister, Yasmin, repeatedly reported her displeasure about her brother airing their family's dirty linen in public by making a few references to them in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. In an article in *The Independent* she says that "he has misrepresented their family's working-class roots for public entertainment and personal profit."⁷

As a matter of fact, in some aspects of the book, Kureishi is accused by the family of fabricating details such as the bitterness of his father, the poor socio-economic status of his grandfather or even his mother's job at a shoe factory. As a result of these allegedly fabricated stories, Kureishi became, according to his sister, the family outcast where his father supposedly did not speak to him for over a year. Whereas Kureishi's own portrayal of his family and upbringing is rather positive, it seems as though his sister is convinced that Kureishi is bullying and full of hatred.

Nonetheless, Kureishi is currently a family man married with twin boys and a younger son as well as a famous pet parrot named Amis. He describes his boys as "Ali G- they do tough gangsta things, they've got hoods on. But no more middle-class boys could you imagine".⁸

⁷The Week, "Kureishi's sister has something to tell him" <http://www.theweek.co.uk/people/37293/kureishi%E2%80%99s-sister-has-something-tell-him>.

⁸The Guardian, "Did I Say That?" <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2009/aug/02/hanif-kureishi-quotes>

Kureishi`s mastery of the English language and his love for controversial topics with a pinch of humour make him the popular author he is.

Theory and Method

“The West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behavior.”

Kureishi`s works present debatable subjects both individually and collectively in relation to the differences in culture, especially with regard to sexuality and masculinity. At the same time, there exists a set of theories and arguments in relation to these subjects as presented through the available literature like Bhabha`s “The Other Question, Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” and even in Hall`s “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” According to Peter Child, these debates assist us to accelerate discussion in postcolonialism, more than in any other period before, as a result of the many waves of immigration, and the need to anchor oneself to a given background.⁹ Investigating the presentations in these works, therefore, becomes important in trying to question why the spirit of belongingness and identity arises in human beings. The collision between the East and the West is truly made visible through these the theorists. In Bhabha`s “Survival of Culture” he states that:

Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order. Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony

⁹ Peter Child, *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

of Third World countries and the discourses of “minorities” within the geopolitical divisions of east and west, north and south. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic “normality” to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples. They formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic and ambivalent moments within the “rationalizations” of modernity.¹⁰

Bhabha`s definition applies to some of the many themes in *The Buddha of Surbiba*, where the main characters experience the differing and uneven development of power between the East and the West. When talking about power in this kind of setting, it is mostly linked to the concepts of race, gender and class. all of which are touched upon by Kureishi.

The main focus in this thesis is to explore how identity and the feeling of belonging develop, and how this may differ from generation to generation. I will use literary analysis in order to identify this. In order to determine this, I will use the work of two theorists, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall, both of whom have specialized on postcolonialism. I will examine the characters, with a focus on Haroon and Karim, with the concept of identity in mind. Also, on this basis, I hope to interpret Kureishi`s thoughts and opinions and discuss them in a wider theoretical context. From this analysis I hope to be able to evaluate whether or not these characters may be seen as initiators for other immigrants and their experiences.

As already mentioned, I will apply postcolonial literary theories as the novel covers the roots and origin from former colonies like India and Pakistan. Postcolonial literature embraces both the past and the present. It covers writings from former colonies and deals with issues

¹⁰ Homi Babha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 171.

like independence, race, diaspora, how the colonial education and language influence the culture and identity of the colonized and how gender, race, and class function in colonial and postcolonial discourse.¹¹ The theory focuses on “the way in which literature by the colonizing culture distorts the experience and realities, and inscribes the inferiority, of the colonized people and literature by colonized people which attempts to articulate their identity and reclaim their past in the face of that past’s inevitable otherness.”¹² The list goes on. All the issues mentioned are traceable in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. The past is represented by Haroon and his brother Anwar. The present is represented by Haroon and Anwar’s offspring, Karim and Jamila. They all represent the Orient in some way. Haroon and Anwar speak warmly of the motherland and its culture, and it is important for them to tell and show people where they are from after many years living in diaspora. Haroon seeks his roots by becoming a guru, Anwar decides that he is the man of the house and will marry his daughter to a distant relative in India. Karim is trapped between two cultures as his mother is English. The country his father and uncle speak so warmly about is too distant and foreign to him as he has never been there himself.

The Theories and Their Relationship to the Subject

This book deliberates the depiction of the lower middle class, represented by the protagonist Karim, in modern literature and academic writing. Karim is from a lower middle class family, but has the opportunity to see the world of the upper class through his

¹¹ Depeeka Bhari, “Introduction to Postcolonial Studies ” <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Intro.html>.

¹² Pittsburg State University, “Some Issues in Postcolonial Theory” <http://www.brocku.ca/english/courses/4F70/postcol.php>.

relationship with Eleanor. This is yet another aspect where Karim is caught between two worlds; he encounters lower class characters at times, and being somewhere between these two classes, he is at times lost. He feels superior to those worse off than himself, and inferior to Eleanor. Through this novel, we realize and denote some informative standpoints on the British lower middle class. The nation that George Orwell once described as “the most class ridden country under the sun,”¹³ has been criticized for its unreceptive isolation by theorists such as Karl Marx who demonstrate the “diminutive men of the higher class as opposed to the proletariat, those of the lower class.”¹⁴ This in addition poses complications for a modern-day cultural policymaking. Rather than represent an old-fashioned or obsolete class structure, on the other hand, the lower middle class might propose a vital key to the present day connotations and meaning of class.

Hall looks at the integration of all these backgrounds and the search for identity and belonging to what he terms as ‘hybridization’. His argument for this theory is that across a whole range of cultural forms, there exists a form of system where the dynamics that hold all these issues together is somehow able to associate important elements of the diversities from the master codes of the dominant culture and articulate them or disseminate them to bring about a certain meaning.¹⁵ This in essence may mean that these two diversified cultures, although they initially had a significant connection, might at the point where and when they mix, share some common identities and they may as well stop being looked at as individual entities. This kind of merging has seen the rise of concocted languages like Jamaican English. This is a clear indication of this proposal as a way of looking into the relationship of some cultural practices in view of their background and their contribution to literature in postcolonial times.

¹³ George Orwell, ‘England Your England’, http://orwell.ru/library/essays/lion/english/e_eye_.

¹⁴ <http://www.mltranslations.org/Britain/Marxclass.htm>.

¹⁵ Peter H. Mardsen, ‘Identity, Alterity and Hybridity (IDAH).’ Lit Ugal [online journal] <http://www.lit.ugal.ro/IdentityAlterityHybridity/IAH-Abstracts.htm>.

Identity and Belonging

“From the start I tried to deny my Pakistani self. I was ashamed.”

These are Kureishi's own words in his essay “The Rainbow Sign.” He continues to tell that he at times wished he was white and like everyone else. After reading this essay, one can easily draw a parallel to Kureishi's character Karim and his experiences as a young teenager. They both struggle to find their place, and none of them is willing to accept what he calls separatism.

I saw racism as unreason and prejudice, ignorance and a failure of sense...And the separatism, the total loathing of the white mass as innately corrupt, the ‘All white are devils’ view, was equally unacceptable...My mother was white. I wasn't ready for separate development. I'd had too much of that already.¹⁶

Kureishi is particularly concerned with the complexity of identity, especially British identity, and the path to discover this when coming from a mixed-race family. Racial discourse is highly represented in the book as a representation of social injustice and aspirations made towards nationalism; the characters are all influenced by aspects of globalization and cultural influences.¹⁷ After reading both Kureishi's essays and *The Buddha of Suburbia*, I argue that in exploring the characters in this novel, and their various identities, Kuresishi wants us to see that by moving further into the global culture, every individual can and must adapt himself/herself to the transformation around them, taking whatever is best from each culture and putting it together so it fits to his or her identity.

¹⁶ Hanif Kureishi, *The Word and the Bomb* (Faber and Faber, 2005), 20.

¹⁷ Nathanael O'Reilly, 'Embracing Suburbia: Breaking Tradition and Accepting the Self in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*.', *Literary London* [online journal], <http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2009/oreilly.html>.

Kureishi's claims that "the world is now hybrid" and that what is required is inventive inscriptions that provide us with a sense of the changes and complications which are expressed within our society.

Heritage and Legacy

"In England I was a playwright. In Karachi this meant little."

In trying to create grounds for belonging, Kureishi uses the themes of heritage and legacy to try and connect the characters in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Through various characters such as Eva, Kureishi shows how people strive to overcome ethnic difference through the integration of cultural heritage and social change. In other words, cultural heritage is used by Kureishi as a means of creating ethnical identity and creating some form of legacy for the individuals.

Hall looks at this ideology from the perspective that one cannot quite definitely speak of identity or belonging, without acknowledging its other side. In this context the other side could be the urge to relate to a certain culture or community.¹⁸

The idea of curving out or retaining an identity seems to be dominantly influenced by the cultures within which this new identity is being formed. The knowledge of their background informs what they do at present, and how they go on with their lives currently. This can be demonstrated by integrating Hall's argument or theory that there are primarily two types of identity. The first one being what he calls identity as being. This offers a sense of unity and commonality. The second one presents an identification process, which tends to reveal discontinuity in our identity formation. These theories underline the one important aspect: that

¹⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

of wanting to belong or to be associated with a society that has a certain clearly defined way of doing particular things. In other words, one is not part of the major culture, but marginalized.

Masculinity and Sexuality

“It was unusual , I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls.”

This discussion is significant and relevant to any debate on postcolonial literature since it is after this period that most nations settled and looked back at important topics such as sexuality. It is during this period that there arose in depth interrogation into issues like sexuality. *The Buddha of Suburbia* depicts this at some point where sexuality is looked at as purely natural, in the sense that women and men are deemed to have distinct characteristics which remain for long unchanged, and are to some extent unchangeable throughout history and irrespective of cultures. However, there is another point of view on this topic which points to the artificiality of sexual and gender identities.¹⁹ At this point, there arises what is seen as ‘the constructed character of sexuality’ that is argued to have been tilted to negate the claim that sexuality has a natural and distinctive shape and movement. In relation to this whole matter though, there seems to be an underlying view that sexual and gender identities vary across cultures. In trying to create or claim belonging to certain cultures, it will be found that the issue of masculinity pops up its head and in this aspect is clearly captured in this novel as well as in the theories that look into the matters of human background and belonging.²⁰ I will go further into how Kureshi depicts this topic later on in the thesis..

¹⁹ Ruvani Ranasinha, ‘Racialized Masculinities and Postcolonial Critique in Contemporary British Asian Male-authored Texts’, *Journal of Postcolonial*, 45/3 (2009), 297-307 .

²⁰ Ranasinha, 297-307.

Immigration and changes in British society

“The Immigrant is the Everyman of the Twentieth Century”

The Buddha of Suburbia, is set in a period when British society was experiencing several social dilemmas regarding how to handle intercultural influences in the post-colonial period. In fact, it has been said that the novel is as much about Karim`s personal experience to find his true identity, as it is Britain`s struggle to accept a multicultural society. In 1968, Enoch Powell, a former Conservative Party Member, attacked and critiqued the development of a multicultural society. “Powell`s concern was rooted in his belief that the nation and nationhood could only be defined meaningfully in cultural and ethnic terms. The presence of a large number of black immigrants in Britain he therefore viewed as a threat to the stability and social cohesion of society.”²¹ It is clearly a challenge growing up as a foreigner surrounded by ideas like this. Several experiences are given to show the cultural and racial struggles of the minority population in Britain. Some of the struggles and challenges faced by Karim have been significantly eroded in today`s globalized society, but they still mirror the same challenges facing the world today, in terms of racial and social prejudice. In Britain, the postcolonial period heralded a new period of multicultural dynamics of modern civilizations, especially in London. Not many people were open to the prospect of a multicultural society and therefore, many people were not willing to accept other cultures and races. Consequently, there was a lot of racism during the period when *The Buddha of Suburbia* was written. The novel gives evidence of extreme racism that Karim experienced in the school playground when he was called different names like “shit face,” “curry face,” and other derogatory terms. In fact, Karim considered it lucky to go home without any injury. Here, it can be clearly seen

²¹ Shamit Saggar, *Race and Politics in Britain* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 176.

that violence was used as a tool to fight multiculturalism and non-conformity to societal norms was frowned upon, if not punished. However, Karim's personal journey to find his identity is not only defined by extreme racism, there is enough evidence to suggest that Britain was also experiencing a strong exclusivity of class that proved a big hurdle for Karim and other immigrants of his stature to succeed. From the exclusivity of class experienced in Britain at that time described in the novel, Karim realized that he was among the disadvantaged people in society, and British natives often had very low expectation of him in this regard. Largely, this is a fair representation of the perception immigrants in Britain had at the time. Immigrants were mainly perceived to be disadvantaged and their place in Britain was to serve.²²

Karim's experience in Britain is cognizant of this fact, and there is no better way to show the low expectations of immigrants than through the educational system. Karim's schooling experience is characterized by the acquisition of practical skills as opposed to the acquisition of academic skills. Largely, this phenomenon described the expectations of most immigrants. Their disadvantaged status was clearly visible in this regard.

Nonetheless, in the 70's, there was a general restriction of immigrants who could stay in Britain. The changes in immigrant status were partly informed by the growing concern among Britons of an expanding immigrant community. Even in the wake of these legislative changes, immigration did not entirely stop because there was a strong need for workers in the British economy.²³ "When economic need demanded black labour, Britain was eager to house black workers; once the need had passed Britain was unwilling to contemplate the full

²² BBC, "Short History of Immigration."
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2002/race/short_history_of_immigration.stm.

²³ BBC, "Short History of Immigration."
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2002/race/short_history_of_immigration.stm#1950.

consequences.”²⁴ The use of immigrant soldiers to fight for the British during the First World War and the Second World War also increased immigration into the UK. After the war, many people who had a British passport were automatically admitted to the UK. Others gained entry because of their relations with resident immigrants. Even though strict regulations were enforced in the UK after the mass migration of workers into Britain, the non-white population still increased because many of the non-white population were children born in Britain.²⁵

The focus on British identity and belonging has become more and more evident as result of the many immigrants settling in the country. Due to this settlement it has unfortunately come to a division between the white English population and the immigrants, there is a visible border between “us” and “them”. According Christina Julios, “negative images, stereotypical and pejorative public representations of minority ethnic groups are known to contribute to a sense of alienation and low self – esteem among members of these communities.”²⁶

What is identity?

The concept of identity has often been ambiguous, but it has been applied in many disciplines across the world. However, this concept has mainly been used in political science to explain national, ethnic, racial or gender issues. Many researchers have different interpretations of the term and many more have deemed it a social terminology that characterizes social membership rules that highlight a specific category of behaviour. Other

²⁴ Walvin, as found in Momoduo Sallah and Carlton Howson, *Working With Black People* (Russell House Publishing, 2007), 4.

²⁵ BBC, “Short History of Immigration.”
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/uk/2002/race/short_history_of_immigration.stm#1950.

²⁶ Christina Julios, *Contemporary British Identity. English Language, Migrants and Public Discourse* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 10

researchers have perceived the concept to be a set of socially distinguishing features that people take pride in.²⁷ Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall's definitions of identity have not differed much from the common definition of identity, although their definitions are heavily contextualized to the postcolonial period.

Homi Bhabha is of the opinion that a lot of racial identities and racial conflicts witnessed today draw their roots from the colonial era. Hall also perceives the concept of identity to be largely defined by historical and cultural ideals that have been passed on from generation to generation. Through this analysis, Hall believes that identity is more than a discipline to study or even criticize, it is still an ongoing process so that its completion cannot be easily established. Indeed, like his counterpart, Bhabha, Hall believes that the concept of identity is an ongoing process.

Bhabha is also of the opinion that within the realm of identity, there is the important notion of "hybridity". Hybridity, Bhabha argues, overthrows the experiences of colonial power and ruling cultures. The possibility of cultural 'hybridity' is hereby assumed to lack a basis for imposed hierarchy. This gap in identity forms the groundwork for Bhabha's further assertion that identity can also be perceived as a product of two ethnicities. For example, Karim was born from a Hindu father, but he was predominantly raised in Britain within the English culture, and his mother was British. Here, we can see that his identity is a product of two ethnic backgrounds. By avoiding the risk of essentialism, Bhabha explains that the negative people are always the ones behind a unified definition of identity to mobilize support

²⁷ James Fearon, "What is Identity (As We Now Use The Word), <http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/papers/iden1v2.pdf>.

for their personal pursuits.²⁸ Therefore, any issue that may be perceived to be contrary to the idea of unified culture is perceived to be radical.

The concept of 'hybridity' as a platform to explain personal identity has been firmly supported by Bhabha and Hall, but by a long shot, it was used as a fearful discourse of racial mixing that characterized a large part of the 19th century. The common notion characterizing this period was firmly entrenched in scientific ideas which perpetrated the assumption that Africans, Asians and other ethnic minorities were mainly inferior to the white race, and the fear of miscegenation that followed the popularity of this ideology suggested that hybrid identities were going to neutralize the European race. In fact, hybrid identities were perceived to be more inferior to the minority traces, such as black, Asians, pacific islanders and the likes.

Therefore, according to Bhabha, the notion of colonial "hybridity" altered the state of power because it produced colonial ambivalence among colonial masters. Bhabha gives the example of how cohesive groups in society have expressed their dominance over other groups, based on group identities, and proposes that this perception of identity is not factual because of its insensitivity to the awareness of subject positions. In other words, Bhabha proposes that identity should move beyond the singularities of individual ownership to the processes that create these cultural differences. Similarly, if two groups were to clash because of their cultural differences, the basis for the conflict should be assumed to be the identity space between the two different groups. The conflict zone can similarly be perceived to be the hybrid culture. Bhabha and Hall therefore perceive identity from the "in between" spaces existing between two divergent cultural groups that profess different identities.

²⁸ Alfred Drake, "Hall and Bhabha", Chapman University,
http://ajdrake.com/blogs/456_spr_03/2003/04/week-13-hall-and-bhabha.html.

When we use Bhabha and Hall's understanding of identity, in the cultural context, we can easily understand Karim's personal journey to find his identity. Born in a postcolonial Indian culture and a post-imperialist English society, Karim's identity should not be perceived from any of the two extremes. This is Bhabha's argument and basis for criticism against the individualistic perception of identity. Instead, he proposes the cultural divide between the Indian and British as the new paradigm for analyzing personal identities. Therefore, in Karim's situation, we would understand his identity from the cultural space between the Indian and British cultures. This is the hybrid identity that characterizes the definition of identity in the postcolonial world. The idea of a nation being uniquely pure and holistic is therefore flawed, according to Bhabha and Hall's perception of culture.

First and Second Generation Immigrants

Many studies have identified the differences between first generation immigrants and second generation immigrants in Europe. Indeed, these two groups have different identity development progress. Among the most prominent differences in the development is that second generation immigrants develop a strong personal identity during childhood as opposed to later stages in life.²⁹ Second generation immigrants have a stronger sense of ethnic identity as opposed to first generation immigrants and therefore, the latter tend to preferably associate with people from their ethnic groups. In addition, second generation immigrants do not have a strong sense of racial prejudice because they are good at interacting with people from other cultures. This phenomenon has contradicted previous studies which show that developing a

²⁹ Marks, Amy K. "Emerging Ethnic Identity and Interethnic Group Social Preferences in Middle Childhood: Findings From the Children of Immigrants Development in Context (CIDC) study" in *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 2007, 31(5), 501-513.

strong ethnic identity in early years is an indicator for developing future racial prejudice.³⁰

However, first generation immigrants have a stronger sense of racial prejudice than second generation immigrants. Their sense of identity development is therefore exclusionary because they do not freely associate with people from other races or ethnicities. When we analyze the difference in identity development between the generations, we see that Karim's ability to easily integrate with other communities is representative of the ability of second generation immigrants to freely interact with people from other ethnicities. Specifically, Karim was able to fit into New York's social scene because he did not have strong racial prejudice. However, Karim's father would perhaps experience more difficulty, coming from a Hindu background and living in a British society, to adapt to the same situation as Karim would.

Postcolonial Influences on the Individual's Identity in Britain

In his book, *Asian Adolescents in the West*, Paul A. Singh Ghuman explains that Asian immigrants living in western countries are often confronted by different cultural dynamics that affect their belief and value systems.³¹ He further explains that these cultural dynamics may have different implications on a person's well-being, including the roles in society and the observation of cultural or religious obligations. Other conflicts are far-stretched. For example, focusing on Asian societal values, we can see that there is a lot of emphasis on kinship and family relationships. However, the British society fosters principles of individualism. Such clashes only highlight the postcolonial influences on an individual's identity in Britain. The key question in relation to *The Buddha of Suburbia* is to ask oneself what is British identity? Most of the characters in the book are in search of their identity.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Paul A. Singh Ghuman, *Asian Adolescents in the West* (Leicester: BPS Books, 1999)

They are torn between their Indian background and the English culture. Their desire to belong somewhere is evident throughout. The national identity is difficult to describe due to the many waves of immigration throughout the years. Anne J. Kershen explains it as complex fusion of culture, demographics, economics, politics and mythology. There are many British cultural identities.³²

However, after digging deep in the above issue, we can see that postcolonial influences on an individual's identity transcend value intrusion; they foster a dual identity among individuals where a person cannot purely associate with a specific cultural identity. This principle has been explained in earlier sections of this thesis, but it is a predominant postcolonial influence on individual identities in the postcolonial period. Here, individuals can be seen to speak two languages or possess dynamic linguistic skills that express their biculturalism. Concisely, individuals living in this setup express their identities in a hyphenated way even though they still respect the values and ideals of their paternal cultures.³³ Often, the adaptation to the host culture is nothing more than a functional adaptation.

Studies by Ghuman show that many Asian adolescents living in the west do not want to lose their cultural identities, by adopting western cultural ideals. For example, the Punjabi community has been referred to by the white majority as Indians, but few Punjabis identify themselves this way. We can see that, comprehensively, the postcolonial influence on identity is significantly limited to functional adaptation.

³² Christina Julios, *Contemporary British Identity. English Language, Migrants and Public Discourse* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2008) ,1

³³ Paul A.Singh Ghuman, *Asian adolescents in the West* (Leicester: BPS Books, 1999)

Chapter 2: The Development and Changes of Characters in *The Buddha of Suburbia*

Haroon and Anwar

There are many ideas and thoughts that have been drawn between first generation immigrants and second generation immigrants. These thoughts can easily be used to draw the distinction between Karim and his father Haroon, and his uncle Anwar. The latter two represent the first generation group of immigrants. Indeed, the changes witnessed in Haroon and Anwar mainly stem from their status as first generation immigrants. They are mainly motivated by the dream to pursue a fulfilling life.

Living in a period of economic depression and extensive racial prejudice, Anwar decides to make a better living for himself by setting up a shop and making it into a family run shop in Britain. Largely, this venture characterizes Anwar`s economic development in a country in which immigrants and minority population groups are not fully accepted. Postcolonial literature reflects both on historical aspects and the consequences of imperialism. Anwar`s opposition to western culture is depicted as a strong motivation for his idealistic and traditional Indian prejudice. He will use any opportunity to make people aware of the harm and injustice the British have caused his beloved country. Anwar is portrayed as a shrewd Indian and a shrewd conservative in the midst of a society characterized by conformity. As opposed to Haroon, Anwar does not conform to British stereotypes and remains true to his

cultural heritage. It is through this conviction that Anwar`s character seems to contravene everything that Haroon stands for. It is equally through Anwar`s convictions to stay authentic to his Indian roots that he lives his life according to the expectations of his Indian culture. Indeed, like a respectable Indian father, Anwar tries to dictate the destiny of his daughter, Jamila, by picking a husband for her. When Jamila refuses to be married to the preferred suitor, Anwar goes on a hunger strike. This action shows to what extent Anwar is willing to go to preserve his cultural identity. He fights any attempt to conform to the British way of life where daughters choose whom to marry. In his perception, succumbing to such cultural ambiguities is a mockery of the Indian culture and he would rather stick to his Indian identity than support his daughter`s decision to marry someone of her choice.

As first generation immigrants, Haroon and Anwar have a strong need to survive in their new environment, as opposed to living a fulfilling life by finding happiness in society. After coming to Britain in their twenties, Haroon and Anwar are mainly motivated by the will to make a good living for themselves. Haroon however, becomes more liberal by pursuing non-conventional ways of making money, while Anwar stays true to his Indian ways. As mentioned earlier, Anwar sets up a shop and strives to make it successful by requesting the support of his family members in running the shop. This continuity is very important to him, such that, so when he realizes that his son-in-law has a withered arm, Anwar bases his reservation to accept his son-in-law on his contribution to the shop. He finds his son-in-law both stupid and lazy, but instead of thinking of his daughter and the fact that he forced her into the marriage, he seems to be more worried about the shop. From this understanding, we can see that Anwar`s main preoccupation was making a living for himself. In a snapshot, his pursuit of success is mainly motivated by survival.

On the other hand, Haroon pursues an unconventional way to make a living for himself, but like Anwar, he is mainly preoccupied with surviving in a harsh environment. Haroon

plays the role of a guru. He used his exotic characteristics to stand out and gain recognition among other immigrants. He wore a red and gold waist coat and Indian pajamas to suit his new role as an exotic guru, but still, he could not wash away the immigrant stature. Karim refers to the fact that his father could not efficiently find his way along the streets because he acted like an Indian, just off the boat. Haroon`s desire to portray as a guru might have something to do with the wish to feel special and unique, and to hang on to something that only his kind can relate to. Frantz Fanon addresses this type of situation in his essay “On National Culture”:

The Negro, never so much a Negro as since he has been dominated by the whites, when he decides to prove that he has a culture and to behave like a cultured person, comes to realize that history points out a well-defined path to him: he must demonstrate that a Negro exists.³⁴

One can question the true motive for Haroon`s portrayal of a guru, if it truly is to make people aware of the Indian culture and its rich heritage, or if it is pure selfishness and the need to be recognized. Either way, Haroon accomplish something, and people are intrigued by his presence as a guru. This fascination with Haroon as a guru does not seem to capture the Indian community around him. Fanon writes that:

The native intellectual who comes back to his people by way of cultural achievements behaves in fact like a foreigner. Sometimes he has no hesitation in using a dialect in order to show his will to be as near as possible to the people; but the ideas that he expresses and the preoccupation he is taken up with have no

³⁴ Frantz Fanon, “On National Culture”, in *ENG2321/4321: Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature. Supplement* (Oslo: UIO Representralen, 2007), pp.59-77

common yardstick to measure the real situation which the men and the women of his country know.³⁵

Haroon is a first-generation Indian immigrant. He came from a wealthy Indian family and moved to England for his education. Haroon lacks a strong work ethic and this led him to flunk out of his education and become stuck in a Civil Service job which he dislikes. Haroon is originally from a wealthy Indian family, but moved to England to pursue his education. Due to the lack of a strong work ethic, he failed to graduate, and became an unhappy employee in a Civil Service job. The only way he will be happy working there is to be promoted. However, he cannot be promoted because the white managers would not do so, so long as there are white people waiting to be promoted. This statement manifests the racist environment Haroon and other immigrants were living in, but by extension, it also shows how important it was for Haroon, and other immigrants, to make a good living for themselves and their families. In other words, Haroon's statement expresses a somewhat desperate concern for their socio-economic status and how they felt they were doomed to a specific social class for the rest of their immigrant life in Britain.

In the midst of all the desperation and hopelessness surrounding his immigrant status and the consequent lack of hope, Haroon still strives to change his life by longing for recognition and acceptance. He tries to change his social status by seeking recognition and desiring to gain acceptance from those around him. For example, he brings a dictionary to the train so that he can learn a new word every day to impress the English. He also decides to learn oriental philosophy because the acquisition of this knowledge presents an opportunity for him to change the perception that he is a failure in society. The desire for recognition and acceptance in London is partly derived from Haroon's past where he was raised as a rich child.

³⁵ Ibid, 66.

Haroon never used to work a lot; he never washed the dishes or washed clothes because the servants used to do this. The mission to acquire a better education is a failed one and in spite of this fact, he still craves for recognition among his peers and those around him.

Just like Anwar`s case, the well-being of Haroon`s children is as important as their need to survive in Britain`s harsh reality. Already, we have seen that Anwar wanted his daughter to marry someone of his choice - someone whom he believed would be profitable, not only to his daughter, but also to him. Like other first generation immigrants, Haroon also stressed the importance of success to his sons. He struggled so much to help Karim get a good education that it became almost too obvious that he cared more for his son`s education than his wellbeing. Haroon wanted Karim to become either a doctor or a lawyer, because he believed this was the most important hallmark of success, not only for his son, but also for himself and his family. It can at times look like Haroon`s wish to see his son succeed is partly motivated by his own failures and personal quest for success. However, the dream to see his son succeed in education turns out to be a failure too. The loss of this dream is not only depicted as failure for Karim, but once again, a failure of his father too. To a first generation immigrant, the failure of a child`s education or pursuit is heartbreaking. Indeed, referring to his decision to leave education, Karim explains that telling his father about his choice would be difficult due to the fact that his father has very high hopes regarding Karim`s future. Through the failure of his son, Haroon loses all the possibility of gaining respect through his children and all he is left with is the possibility of redeeming himself through his spiritual work. He achieves a significant degree of success in this regard.

Haroon`s metamorphosis as a first generation immigrant is also conceptualized by his desire to redeem himself and change the perception that he cannot succeed. Through his relationship with Eva, Haroon changes his method of seeking recognition by focusing on how different he is with the Britons, and abandoning all efforts to be like the British. He takes

advantage of the stereotypes leveled against him by acting them out to the satisfaction of the British. In fact, he transforms and harnesses these stereotypes into tools that will fuel his ambition to gain recognition and acceptance in British society, as opposed to being a victim of stereotypes. The process to gain a new identity as a guru can be explained as an exaggerated process of self-authentication, which largely works well for Haroon. Not only does he show the British what it is to be an Indian, but goes overboard and exaggerates his cultural identities to the amusement of the British. Karim admires his father's new attitude, but he is repulsed by the fact that after about two decades of assimilation, his father's return to his Indian roots is exaggerated, and does not truly represent his real values, beliefs or ideals. Moving from India and settling into the British landscape, Haroon faces social stigma and criticism which motivates his personal pursuits as an immigrant in Britain. For example, following his decision to leave his wife for Eva, Haroon receives a lot of criticism. From this criticism, clearly, marrying a Briton and abandoning one's cultural roots is considered an act of failure in the Indian culture. From both sides of the divide, Indian and British societies, Haroon is treated as an outcast and a failure. These sentiments make Haroon feel bad and leave him to feel contempt for his life.

The criticisms Haroon receives from his Indian and British families are mainly informed by his immigrant status and the fact that he abandoned his family for (yet another) British woman. The latter is mainly perceived as the sole reason for the Indian people to look down upon him, but Haroon's immigrant status, and the fact that he lives in the suburbs, is used as the main basis of criticism by his British family. When we analyze these criticisms, we can easily draw a comparison between Haroon's status and the insights regarding identity status by Bhabha and Hall. Particularly, Bhabha explains that identity should not be perceived from only one angle, but from the dual characteristics that give birth to a specific identity status in the postcolonial society. Therefore, if we were to identify Haroon's identity in the context of

Bhabha's framework, we would arrive at a hybrid identity which cannot be described by either his Indian culture or his British association. Indeed, Haroon seems like a reject of both cultures because his way of life is not "pure" to any of the cultures or expectations described above. However, the Indian and British critics pursue a form of identity which is used as an exclusionary basis to criticize anyone that does not conform to the "pure" identity, one or the other. These characteristics highlight the journey of first generation immigrants in Britain.

Jamila

"She was preparing for the guerrilla war she knew would be necessary when the whites finally turned on the blacks and Asians..."

Jamila is probably one of the most vivid female characters in this novel. She seems to trust her own decisions. The young woman is the daughter of Anwar, and like Karim, she belongs to the second generation of immigrants. This aspect is significant for understanding her opinion on the question of her personal and cultural identity. In spite of the fact it was possible to notice the specific attitude to the other nations and races in the British society of the 1960-1970s, Jamila as a second-generation immigrant is not inclined to concentrate on the issue of her cultural "otherness" as the influential factor for her personal problems. In this situation, "otherness" is a category which is based on the definite stereotypes developed in relation to certain nations, ethnic groups, and races.³⁶ It can seem that Jamila discusses her cultural belonging in the context of the global problems associated with the minority groups, and this vision results in her active social position and fight for their rights. With her

³⁶ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

westernized influences, Jamila seems to accept her cultural and ethnic belonging, even more than her father and uncle at times, without referring to the problems that were actively discussed by the first-generation immigrants.

The concept of “oneness” as the important element of the cultural identity is more characteristic for the first-generation immigrants.³⁷ Moreover, it is impossible to refer to the notion of the identity without paying attention to the development of the ethnic group, its characteristic features, specific visions and traditions. According to Hall, “we cannot speak for very long, with any exactness, about one experience, one identity, without acknowledging its other side - the ruptures and discontinuities”.³⁸ The understanding of the personal belonging to this or that group also develops. Hall states that “in this perspective, cultural identity is not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture. It is not some universal and transcendental spirit inside us on which history has made no fundamental mark.”³⁹

Jamila’s behavior represents her understanding of her being a second-generation immigrant in the context of her active social position and her interest in politics and rather radical views. The girl is not really interested in her own position as an immigrant within society, but she examines this problem globally with reference to social movements and political ideas. The problem of identity becomes significant when she experiences the pressure of her father with relation to the necessity of arranging the traditional marriage with a person who is approved by her parents. Nevertheless, Jamila focuses on the aspects of her identity as the personality in her daily life because she knows that there is a lot of negativity regarding immigrants in the British society, but her reaction is characteristic for the

³⁷ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Padmini Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996).

³⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 113.

³⁹ Ibid., 114.

representatives of the second-generation immigrants who are more adaptable to the features of the life in this society with reference to their possible “otherness”. The young people who are depicted by the author as the second-generation immigrants are inclined to associate themselves with the English and understand their origins, but with focusing on the characteristics of their upbringing. Karim focuses on his and Jamila’s position, “the thing was, we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it.”(53)

It is important to note that Jamila’s personal identity depends on the concept of liberty as a reaction to the attempts to discriminate immigrants in British society, the attempts to impose the traditional vision of cultural identity which is typical for Jamila’s parents, the attempts to limit the sphere of her social activity. Accepting the ideas proclaimed by Miss Cutmore, the white librarian who is feeding Jamila with opinions and books, Jamila becomes open to the revolutionary views on the situations and phenomena which are her own representation of liberty. Even though Jamila at times claims that Miss Cutmore has colonized her, Karim gives us a very feministic view of Jamila: “...Jamila was the strongest-willed person I’d met: no one could turn her into a colony.” Jamila’s ideas are not limited by the boundaries of the suburbs, and they have a global character. This fact allows speaking about Jamila’s specific reflection of the concepts of cosmopolitanism in this context. The girl’s active position is explained by her strong character and such a trait as persistence. Thus, “under the influence of Angela Davis, Jamila had started exercising every day, learning karate and judo...she was preparing for the guerilla war”(56). Moreover, speaking about the features of Jamila’s character, Karim states that “she was forceful and enthusiastic, Jamila. She always seemed to be leaning forward, arguing, persuading” (51). All these factors accentuate the girl’s inner freedom from any prejudices and biases which could develop under the specific perception of

her own cultural identity. Jamila`s vision of herself as a second-generation immigrant is based only on the facts and aspects of real life.

Jamila`s liberty which gives the fundament for her identity is associated with the girl`s vision of feminism as the way to realize her freedom. The young woman`s feminism does not stagger even when she was forced to follow her father`s desire to marry a man whom she did not love. Jamila also refuses to live a life according to the definite strict customs and traditions which are connected with the culture of her parents. In spite of the fact that Jamila`s feministic ideas are quite different to Anwar`s vision of the woman`s position in society and family, the marriage with Changez becomes the young woman`s way to liberate herself in the context of her constant struggle for personal identity against the cultural norms and traditions. It is possible to focus on the fact that “marrying Changez would be, in her mind, a rebellion against rebellion, creative novelty in itself. Everything in her life would be disrupted, experimented with.”(82) Not being afraid of any changes, Jamila is always ready for experiments which make her life active and complete. Another example of Jamila`s independence and her ideas of feminism is her decision to live in a commune. From this point, she realizes her main intention to be free and live according to the principles of liberty which are stated in a rather revolutionary manner, but this vision is close to Jamila, and it makes the basis of her personal identity.

It is important to pay attention to the fact that Jamila`s strong personal identity is a more significant factor for her development in comparison with her vision of cultural identity and belonging. This position is accentuated by the nature of the conflict with her father Anwar. Anwar prefers to concentrate on the cultural differences, Indian traditions and customs as the aspect of belonging to the definite ethnicity when Jamila focuses on accepting these differences. Anwar develops the specific identity of an immigrant who tries to preserve his

culture, that is why he is dependent on cultural “fixity.”⁴⁰ As the representative of the second-generation of immigrants Jamila is also greatly influenced by the traditions and norms cultural environment within which she was born. Jamila does not reject the cultural heritage which she has because of her origins, and she admits those cultural norms and expectations which develop in British society. Her task is to combine them in order to form her own specific identity. This fact is the reason for the girl`s concentrating on the problems which are affected not by the issues of cultural and ethnic isolation, discrimination and opposition, but by the common aspects typical for the British youth without reference to their cultural identity. Having analyzed the specifics of the cultural and personal identity from the immigrant perspective, it is possible to say that Jamila`s vision of identity is based not on her belonging to this or that ethnicity or culture, but on her understanding of the liberty and rights within that context which forms her environment. Thus, Jamila is inclined to distinguish between the global idea of belonging and human rights with regard to the rights of minority groups and her own position as an Indian and her own liberties and rights. Jamila knows her origin, but the aspect of the cultural identity is not influential for her as the issue of identifying her position in society as a free person with a specific vision of her development. To determine her position within society, it is not important for Jamila to refer to her cultural identity, and her fight against the aspects of injustice is of an ideological character. Jamila`s attitude to the issue can also be discussed as the multicultural one.

⁴⁰ Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, 94.

Cultural Identity and Belonging from the Non-Immigrant

Perspective;

Eva and Margaret

In the novel, Hanif Kureishi discusses the destinies of many people who are connected by their personal relations, and who are rather different in their nationalities as well as their visions of the world. If the main character of the novel, Karim and his friend Jamila, are the representatives of the second-generation of immigrants who live in the suburbs of London, Eva and Margaret were born in England where they spent all their life. English culture and British society are familiar for them and form their cultural identity. Nevertheless, the women`s contact with the representatives of the Indian culture also significantly influenced their personal identity.

Eva is the “other woman” in this story, a suburban wife who finds Haroon very exotic. She was brought up as an Englishwoman, and she knows everything about all aspects of life in British society. That is why she always did as much as possible in order to overcome the boundaries of life in the suburbs and to reach real success which can be achieved only by climbing higher in the class structure society of London. Eva`s character and peculiar traits are given through Karim`s eyes, “Eva Kay was forward; she was brazen; she was wicked” (8). Being part of English culture and sharing the cultural identity which is typical for this society, Eva is not satisfied with her position. Moreover, her vision of her identity helps her to move forward and then to change the situation of her life. It is important to pay attention to the fact that Eva`s plans of moving to London and joining the upper class become close to reality

under the impact of her relations with Haroon as the representative of the other, Indian culture. Now, “she had a new interest; she was launching a huge campaign. Eva was planning her assault on London”(150). Eva is always active and decisive in her thoughts and actions, and she knows what factors can help to realize her plans.

Eva`s intention to expand the boundaries of her sphere and to acquire a new position can be considered as the definite problems with her identity, which also depend on her personal belonging to the factor of the social opinion. The social opinion is one of the most important and influential aspects to her, she has a goal to rise within British society. That is why Eva prefers to use every opportunity to draw the public`s attention, and from this point of view, Haroon`s ethnicity and the distinctive features of his culture can be considered to be an effective contribution to her social status because of the possibility to attract the attention of the masses because of these cultural differences. Thus, Eva tries to find the balance in the question of identity with the focus on the social progress in British society, and with the concentration on the communication with the Indians whose culture is interesting and impressive for her. The Indian culture does not become part of her cultural identity, but is an important aspect of her personal identity.

Margaret

If Eva is a rather outspoken and self-centered woman with definite desires, Margaret is focused on her family and its members` interests. Her husband, Haroon, takes this for granted and has an affair with Eva. The fact that Margaret is portrayed as a suffering wife who is stuck in an unhappy marriage, makes us take pity on her. She is like a shadow in the Amir household, where nobody truly sees her. She understands her identity as an Englishwoman,

but through her marriage with Haroon, the Indian traditions are part of her life, the specific style of living in the suburbs makes her change the principles and rules of her life according to these aspects. Margaret's identity is also influenced not only by the situation of her belonging to the English culture, but also by the extra factors which form the woman's daily life in the suburbs. Margaret is "a pretty working-class girl from the suburbs." (25) Moreover, it is possible to speak about Margaret's belonging to the suburbs as the place where her home is located. In spite of the fact that Margaret wants to make her life diverse and exciting, she seems to accept her invisibility in the house, and instead of making her family notice her, she makes herself even smaller.

Margaret's identity is formed as a result of the impact of two cultures, but it can also be looked at as quite stable. Admitting the principles of the two opposite cultures, Margaret also feels comfortable without hoping to shift her social status. Nevertheless, the problems in her private life make Margaret focus more strictly on her identity and inclinations. It is possible to conclude that Eva and Margaret are born in England, but their feeling of identity is influenced by their close interaction with the representatives of the Indian culture.

Charlie

"It's ridiculous the way people are appointed to jobs. Surely it should happen at random?"

The problem of identity is not as significant for Eva and Margaret as for Eva's son, Charlie, who passionately strives to find his place in the world, to achieve his goal and become famous. Charlie is an Englishman, he is not an immigrant, and he lives in the context of the culture whose principles, customs and traditions he was brought up in. However, there is the situation in Charlie's life when he experiences the fact of being immigrant in the USA.

In spite of the character of the environments, different circumstances and situations, the life of immigrants is often associated with a kind of struggle for the best position within the foreign society. Each person makes his or her own choice to what extent it is necessary to follow the foreign traditions because it is impossible to avoid the fact of the definite assimilation under the surroundings.⁴¹ Some people are inclined to accent on the benefits which their differences from the other society can bring, and other people prefer to follow their national traditions in order “to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity which makes them be part of their cultural whole in contrast with the situation of being the `other` person within a foreign society.”⁴² Even so, they will still always be the “other.”

Being a non-immigrant, Charlie experiences all the problems which are typical for the persons who have to live in a foreign community, and he also tries to determine his own cultural and personal identity. Hoping to gain the recognition and become famous in the future, Charlie is good at adapting to the circumstances and imitating all the ideas which can help him to achieve his goal. The problem is in fact that Charlie cannot perceive himself as a unique personality; he develops his feeling of identity because of his constant orientation to the public`s opinion and the social trends. When Charlie succeeds within the field of show business he is satisfied, but his identity is still difficult to determine. This young man understands that any limits in his vision of the world and its details can limit his own success. That is why he is able to assess the advantages and make provocative decisions. If his feeling of identity as an Englishman can contribute to the success, he uses this chance. Kureishi indicates that being in the USA, Charlie “was selling Englishness, and getting a lot of money for it”(245). Thus, he played according to the national contrasts and differences which can draw a lot of the public`s attention to his personality. Nevertheless, Charlie can easily change his identity and accents those aspects which can be useful for him while adapting to the new

⁴¹ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi: A Reader`s Guide to Essential Criticism* (USA Palgrave Macmillan,2005).

⁴² Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,”. 116.

situation. The problematic formation of his identity is also based on the question of relations in his family. The young man suffers from the lack of a father`s attention, and this fact influences his level of self-confidence. That is why there are no situations when Charlie is ready to identify himself in relation to the cultural context and to his own vision of him as a personality. Charlie is oriented to the public`s opinion, something that makes it possible to say that this understanding of the notion of belonging should be discussed in the context of society. Moreover, his mother`s relations with an Indian man also expand Charlie`s visions of cultures and traditions making the process of identifying himself as a part of the definite society more difficult. Charlie has the opportunity to observe the aspects of the cultural and personal identity in relation to his mother, Haroon and Karim.

Charlie belongs to a society within which he is inclined to act in the space of this very moment. If Karim and Jamila`s problems with their cultural identity are the result of the extra factors and the peculiarities of the ethnic and cultural environment within which they have to live, Charlie`s issues are associated with his inner personal dissatisfaction. His ability to adapt to the situation is more intense in comparison with that of Karim and Jamila in their struggle for their identity and position in society. However, they prefer to focus on searching for the balance between the cultural differences and similarities when Charlie chooses that culture and those peculiarities and traditions which are in trend and more advantageous for him. On the one hand, Charlie`s flexibility in making decisions and varying his identity according to his needs is effective for his success, but on the other hand, it is also the cause for his feeling confused and frustrated. Charlie`s perception of his identity is not formed completely, and it greatly depends on his ability to adapt to the situation according to his goals and definite circumstances.

Karim

The Peculiarities of Karim Amir's Identity

Karim Amir is the protagonist of Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and all the situations and characters of the story are presented from Karim's perspective. Hanif Kureishi discusses a lot of significant social issues in his novel such as racism and interactions between the representatives of different social classes with reference to the characters' attitude to these questions and with depicting their inner struggles and searches for the personal, cultural, and social identity and belonging. From this point of view, the problem of Karim's identity is one of the most controversial aspects of the novel. Karim Amir was brought up in the family of his Indian immigrant father Haroon, and his mother Margaret who was of English origins. Thus, growing up in the atmosphere of the British suburbs near London, Karim always experienced difficulties with identifying himself because his vision of his culture and identity was opposed to the visions of the people who surrounded him.

Karim's Search for his Personal and Cultural Identity and his Inner Conflict

The problem of Karim's identity is introduced in the first pages of the novel when the young boy describes himself. Thus, Karim states, "I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories"(3). The readers are inclined to pay attention to the word "almost" and to the character's emergence from two ethnicities. This statement accentuates the fact that Karim predominantly considers himself as an Englishman, but norms and

customs of his origin do not allow determining his ethnical and cultural identity strictly. He is not just an Englishman, but “a funny kind of Englishman.” This position of Karim in relation to his identity is influenced by the distinctiveness of his origins and by the public’s attitude to the representatives of the ethnicities which are different from the English one. In spite of this fact the author draws the readers’ attention to Karim’s ironical position according to his ethnicity and complex feeling of identity, it is possible to focus on Karim’s dissatisfaction with his status because of the stereotypes developed in society.

The protagonist’s inner conflict is emphasized with the help of Karim’s describing himself when he indicates, “Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs”(3). It can seem that Karim is not proud of the fact that he was born and brought up as an Englishman, but the development of the situation supports the progress of the inner conflict because being the real Englishman is the only way to shift the social position and overcome the effects of the racial prejudice. Moreover, Karim is inclined to express rather negative comments on his own actions and behavior which accentuate the development of the inner conflict. Karim states that he is “always the voyeur” or he is “a real bastard inside”(104). The conflict is not expressed intensively, but it can explain the logics of Karim’s actions and opinions.

Karim’s search for his personal and cultural identity begins from his rejection of the traditions which are typical for the peaceful suburban life. The protagonist tries to explain his dissatisfaction with the opportunities provided in the suburbs with the help of stating his origin, “perhaps it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored” (3). That is why, he hopes to find the answers to the questions of his identity in the city where there are a lot of different opportunities. Karim is intensively involved in the search for his identity, and he is ready for a lot of experiments which can help him to understand himself. Associating this point with the

problem of boredom, Karim states “I was looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest I could find, because things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy, in our family”(3).

What is Karim’s attitude to his cultural background? Karim identifies himself as an Englishman because he was brought up in Britain, he speaks English and behaves like the English. Moreover, he does not know the language of the Indians, he has never been to India, and he does not follow the religion of his father. The only cultural elements which connect Karim with the Indian cultural heritage are his preferences for spicy food and yoga. That is why it is possible to concentrate on the idea that Karim feels like an Englishman, and is rather distant from the Indian culture. He does not belong to the Indian ethnic heritage because the British surroundings affected the young boy significantly. However, it is also impossible to reject the impact of the Indian roots which influence Karim through his everyday interaction with his father, Jamila, and her family.

Understanding the peculiarities of the Englishmen’s attitude to the representatives of the other ethnicities, Karim tries to determine his own identity which is too complex and cannot be explained by the color of his skin according to which he is perceived in society. Hanif Kureishi portrays Karim as a person who is inclined to change his identities several times owing to his social impact under definite conditions. Identity is a phenomenon which develops under the impact of different factors and with reference to the person’s age.⁴³ That is why, the process of Karim’s complicated search of identity and its changing is reasonable. If Karim is depicted on the first pages as a person who is in search of and ready for experiments, the boy is discussed in the last part of the novel as an individual who has learnt deep feelings, not only experiments of various kinds, and he supposes, “perhaps in the future I would live more deeply”(284).

⁴³ Alamgir Hashmi, “Hanif Kureishi and the Tradition of the Novel,” *Critical Survey* 5, no. 1 (1993).

Karim's Position in Society and the Issue of Racism

Karim desired to leave the suburbs and move to London because he wanted to change his social status. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of the social status of immigrants of the first and second generations depends on various components. Thus, in spite of the fact that Karim belongs to the second generation of immigrants and does not consider himself as an Indian, the English are inclined to see the “other” one, the non-Englishman, in his personality. Moreover, non-Englishness is also treated with a kind of prejudice and even social discrimination which is based on a lot of stereotypes. Karim understands that he will never be considered as a real Englishman because of his roots and the color of his skin. This understanding of the differences between Englishmen and the others is part of his self-identity.

Racism was especially noticeable in the late 1970s when the British National Party won a seat in the Isle of Dogs. The conflicts and fights were between white racists and Bangladeshis.⁴⁴ Karim experiences the first signs of racism and discrimination at a young age in school. Thus, he “was sick too of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings,” and moreover, Karim was happy “to get home from school without serious injury”(63). Even if Karim did not feel different, the people around him make him feel different. The alienation starts from a young age. The conflict between Karim and the people who surround him is complicated with the fact that Karim feels himself to be an Englishman, but at times he has to face the fact that he is also Indian. These situations seem to happen when Karim spends time with his aunt and

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Hall, Tarquin, *Salaam Brick Lane. A Year in the New East End* (London: John Murray, 2005) .

uncle, who in Karim's eyes are more Indian than the rest of the family. Both Haroon and Anwar try to connect the boy with his Indian roots.

In spite of Karim's father's ideas and the boy's own desires, the system of education is also based on elements of social prejudice. Like mentioned earlier, Karim was happy the days he could walk home after school without injuries. Young people do not always understand why some people are different. Even today, when the world should be tolerant and accepting diversity after many years living side by side with people from different nations and cultures, the playground at school is often a place where social prejudice is acted out. How do you grow up and accept your identity when people tell you that you are not one of them? You do not belong in the group called "English," yet you do not feel at home with the group called "Indian." Is it possible to find a golden path?

Furthermore, Karim is personally oppressed by the parents of his "white" friend Helen because they consider him to be unequal to their daughter. From this point of view, the author describes the complex picture of the social interactions between immigrants and the English within an everyday life.

The family of Karim belongs to the lower middle class. This might be why both Haroon and his son find it difficult to change their social position, especially with reference to their status of immigrants. However, the members of the family do not give up hoping and try to realize the social shift with the help of moving to London. Karim sees a lot of opportunities in this situation, but then he realizes that the distance between the upper classes of London and the world of art on the one hand, and himself with his dream to become the actor on the other is too significant. Karim is perceived in any society as the Indian because of the obvious differences in his appearance. This fact provokes many acts of racism during his childhood and determines his social position during his youth and adulthood. Nevertheless, Karim is

actively ready to accept the peculiarities of other people's behavior and their customs in order to be close to the interesting and important people culturally and socially.

Karim's vision of many aspects of the personal relations and social activities is rather progressive, and this flexibility helps him to feel more comfortable while interacting with the representatives of the other cultures and social classes. On the one hand, Karim's flexibility in relation to his identity is beneficial for him because of providing a lot of opportunities for the social shift. On the other hand, Karim suffers from his hybrid identity because of his desire to live the life of the English star, but not that of the ordinary Indian immigrant. That is why, when Karim begins to interact with the upper social classes and has a relationship with Eleanor he tries to hide any possible differences which can prevent him from communication within this class. Karim is different not only because of his appearance but also because of his accent. When Eleanor pays attention to Karim's accent he states that "at that moment I resolved to lose my accent: whatever it was, it would go. I would speak like her"(178). Thus, it is more important for Karim to adapt to the peculiarities of the surroundings and get rid of the differences which prevent him from integrating into the new community, than to preserve his identity.

Nevertheless, Karim cannot get rid of the color of his skin, that is why the young man's social identity is closely connected with his experience as an actor. On the one hand, the role of Mowgli is considered by Karim as the possibility to start his career. On the other hand, the proposition of this role is the evidence of his differences from the other 'white' people. Hoping to get the role because of his talent or definite skills, Karim understands that he can expect to get the role because of his appearance. It is stated in the novel that the young man is "cast for authenticity and not for experience"(140). Karim's ambitions are challenged by the reality of the world of actors and directors, and there is also the significant and influential social stratification in it.

From this point, Karim has to act the roles of Indians because he is limited by a lot of social stereotypes which are developed at all the stages and in all the spheres of social life. It is even possible to speak about identifying the figure of Karim with the character of Mowgli with respect to their survival in strange surroundings. People are inclined to develop stereotypes in relation to different ethnicities because they usually divide society into their group and the others. Such a division is the first step in the progress of the ethnical or racial prejudice which can even result in discriminating actions against the representatives of the “other” ethnicity.⁴⁵ All these issues are rather challengeable for immigrants, and Karim experiences all the stages of prejudice while studying at school and then working as an actor. Karim’s ethnicity becomes the significant factor for the development of his further career because the young man’s professionalism is not discussed as the influential aspect for determining which roles will be given to him, and Karim has to act appropriately, according to the expectations of the directors.

Karim experiences all those kinds of prejudice and stereotypes in the world of acting which he hates in society in general. The public expects this young Indian man to be the good Mowgli, but the things which can connect Karim with Mowgli in this situation are the color of his skin and his ethnicity with which Karim does not identify himself because he has essentially been brought up as an Englishman. That is why, discussing the role of the Indian in British society with reference to the role of Mowgli, Karim states, “everyone looks at you, I’m sure, and thinks: an Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we’ll hear now from him. And you’re from Orpington”(141). The roles of Indian characters which are got by Karim reflect only the appearance of the young man, but it is not interesting for directors to observe Karim’s talent and address to his experience as an actor. The ethnicity and the social belonging of Karim become the factors that explain the social and

⁴⁵ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

professional discrimination that he experiences, and they accentuate the young man's line as an actor who performs exotic Indians on the stage and in films. Instead of rejecting his ethnicity he embraces it due to the fact that he is now a well-known name in the world of theatre. He enjoys his success, but soon realizes that he does not fit into this environment. In addition to the topic of race and racism, the importance of class is made up after Karim's introduction to the director, Matthew Pyke. Even though Karim has his suspicions regarding Pyke's intentions, all it takes for the director to convince Karim to work with him is to mention the fact that the play will be about class. "I think it may revolve around the only subject there is in England...Class" (164) Even though Karim can put on an act, his background prevents him from fully integrating to the upper-class society where he tries to fit in after his success with the play.

Karim's Sexual Identity

Sexuality is also a necessary part of the personal identity which can influence the individual's perception of himself and that of other people. Moreover, the importance of sexual orientation can be discussed in society as significant for developing certain stereotypes and biases. "People who experience insecurity and find sexuality difficult may reflect their inner world because they do not perceive themselves as the mature personalities."⁴⁶ The notion of identity has a lot of sides and the issue of sexuality is one of the most important aspects for determining the personality as a whole with all its desires and inclinations.⁴⁷

Karim's sexual identity is also a hybrid of his visions of sexuality and his perceptions of men

⁴⁶ Karen K. Dion and Kenneth L. Dion, "Gender, Immigrant Generation, and Ethnocultural Identity", *Sex Roles* 50, no. 5-6 (2004).

⁴⁷ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Padmini Mongia (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

and women. There are no strict differences for him in the fact of having sexual relations with women or men because his attitude to sex is not mature. Sexual relations are discussed by Karim as a kind of an experiment in order to reduce the feeling of boredom which follows him everywhere. All the young man's sexual relations are based on desire, passion, and sexual interest, but not on some deep feelings like love. In spite of the fact that Karim says that he loves Eva's son Charlie, his attitude to the man depends on his interest in the figure of Charlie as the remarkable personality which he at times envies. Moreover, Charlie is the sexual object for Karim, and he expects that his relations with Charlie can help him to get rid of the boredom of life in the suburbs.

Sexual relations are one of the important issues in the novel because their depiction is necessary for presenting the characters' attitudes to their personal identities. Thus, Karim has no strict visions of his sexual orientation. He is neither heterosexual, nor homosexual, and this detail accentuates the general aspects of the young man's hybrid identity. It is possible to speak about Karim's search for his identity from several perspectives, and his sexuality is one of them. It is not significant for Karim to declare that he is strictly homosexual or heterosexual because his sexuality and the lack of a stable identity in this field help him to adapt to the situations he has to face. Karim has sexual relations with girls when he has some feelings for them and wants to express his emotions. Karim's deepest feeling is also directed to the woman Eleanor. Karim and his friend Jamila also have sexual relations, but they perceive this as part of relations between friends because the boy and girl do not discuss them as serious ones, but only as the result of physical desires. Nevertheless, Karim's sexual relations with Charlie cannot be seen only as experimenting because the young man feels real admiration for Charlie. Karim's sexuality can also be examined from the point of the social processes of the 1970s and be discussed as the reflection of these tendencies. However, it is

more relevant to refer to Karim's sexual identity as the reflection of his unstable cultural and personal identity.

Does Karim feel that his sexuality is perceived by other persons as unusual? What is his attitude to the question? In the first part of the novel, Karim states, "it was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls"(55). Nevertheless, the development of the situations supports the idea that this fact does not hurt Karim much, but only reflects his uncertainty in relation to the other aspects of his life. Thus, the young man cannot determine not only his sexual orientation but also his cultural and ethnical identity. These issues influence the whole life of Karim and make him orient himself in the world according to his emotions and feeling, but not according to his cultural, religious or ethnical peculiarities.

The Features of Karim's Identity and the Culture of his Father

The characteristic of belonging to the definite culture or place affects the person's style of living because he is often inclined to organize his life according to the norms and expectations of the culture, in this case, the representation of two cultures, historical development of the ethnicity, its customs and traditions. From this point of view, cultural customs and certain traditions are extremely important for everyone because they connect the person with the roots and surround him or her from birth.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, sometimes the ethnicity and the conditions of bringing up are not associated with each other. This situation can be discussed as rather problematic for a person with reference to the question of his or her identity. The feeling of belonging to the place or to the definite culture is significant for

⁴⁸ Peter Childs, "Introduction: Colonial History, National Identity and English Literature", in *Post-Colonial Theory and English Literature: A Reader*, edited by Peter Childs (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

people because the understanding of this fact gives them a kind of support.⁴⁹ Immigrants of the second generation can have a lot of difficulties with identifying themselves in relation to the question of their ethnicity and culture because they are brought up in an environment which does not reflect the characteristics of their origins. The conflict of identities is stimulated by the absence of similarities in the appearance of the representatives of different races or ethnicities.⁵⁰ Moreover, the conflict can be affected by the differences in identities of the parents as the first-generation immigrants and of their children as the representatives of the immigrants of the second generation.

Is it possible to state that Karim belongs to the culture of his father Haroon? The answer is negative because Karim does not strictly consider himself as an Indian. Thus, the young man is rather the 'unusual' Englishman, but not the Indian. Moreover, Karim does not identify himself in relation to definite religious views, and he cannot state that he is a Muslim. The language of his father is also unfamiliar to Karim because there is no necessity of using it in the environment in which Karim lives. The impossibility to present himself as an Englishman and to be perceived in society as the representative of British circles makes Karim suffer from his uncertain identity. Moreover, he also has few similarities with his father's cultural and ethnical identity. In spite of the fact that Karim like his father uses the differences in race and culture in order to earn money and win a position in society, the young man is more frustrated with the results of his life because his appearance does not reflect his feeling of being an Englishman when Haroon behaves and acts according to his identity and his perception of himself as the Indian. The examples of Haroon and Karim help to understand the differences in the identities of immigrants of the first and second generations.

⁴⁹ Susie Thomas, *Hanif Kureishi: A Reader's Guides to Essential Criticism* (USA Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁵⁰ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Hanif Kureishi* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 43 .

Discussing the difficulties of Karim's belonging and identity, it is possible to note that he refers to belonging to the suburbs where he was brought up rather than to any definite culture or ethnicity.⁵¹ The peculiar features of the suburban surroundings influenced the boy's vision of the world more intensively than the aspects of his parental culture. That is why, Karim does not feel that he belongs with the Indians. Nevertheless, the understanding of a personal identity can change during life under the impact of various factors. The death of Anwar is the influential factor for Karim's rethinking the problem of his identity, but it is almost impossible to start perceiving the world in a different way with reference to the aspects of the cultural identity when the previous experience accentuates other visions and ideals. The fact of Anwar's death helps Karim to think over his non-Englishness and reminds him of the characteristics of his cultural and ethnical roots, but it does not change Karim's uncertain identity. The one point which is realized by Karim is the idea that he belongs to the suburbs, but the understanding of his belonging is affected by a lot of different and problematic situations. Thus, once Karim states, "I wanted to run out of the room, back to South London, where I belonged, out of which I had wrongly and arrogantly stepped" (148). The life experience and background help Karim to realize the fact that his belonging to South London and suburbs is the one stable thing in his life, and the other sides of his identity are rather uncertain. Furthermore, Karim does not want to belong to London, but he states that it would be better when the city belonged to him with providing a lot of the opportunities for his personal and professional development.

⁵¹ Nahem Yousaf, *The Buddha of Suburbia: A Reader's Guide* (New York: Continuum, 2002).

The Comparison of the Identities of Karim and Jamila

Karim and Jamila are the representatives of the second generation of immigrants; that is why their perception of their identities differs from the identities of their parents because the fathers of Karim and Jamila suffer from living in British territories while having strong cultural connections with their native territories. Karim and Jamila have no such connections, and they can analyze their ethnicities only with reference to the public's perception. Karim's identity is a mixed variant of the British and Indian traditions with reference to the fact that the British traditions are close to Karim because he was brought up surrounded by them and his knowledge of the Indian culture is limited to the stories and visions of his father. Moreover, the family of Eva and Haroon has few similarities with the families of the Indian culture, and it is oriented towards British society with reference to culture and their intentions to occupy the higher social positions.

The situation in Jamila's family is quite opposite because her parents follow the traditions of their nation. However, like Karim, Jamila does not feel that she belongs to Indian culture. The characteristics of Jamila and Karim and their surroundings make them suffer from the facts of prejudice and discrimination, but according to their own visions of their identities, they see themselves as cosmopolites who do not belong strictly to this or that culture or tradition. That is why the situation when Anwar imposes his will on Jamila and makes her marry a man according to the tradition of arranged marriages is discussed by Karim and Jamila as a kind of oppression. Nevertheless, Jamila perceives her new role as the way to demonstrate her definite social, political, and personal visions when Karim cannot get used to the situation at all because all these customs are rather strange for him as a man who grew in a society where the main accents were on the personal independence.

Karim's feeling of identity is the complex combination of his attitudes to his origins, roots, the perception of his figure within society, and his reaction to the issues of prejudice and discrimination. Moreover, the young man's personal identity is complicated by his uncertain sexual orientation which he cannot determine to be homosexual or heterosexual. Trying to make the shift from the lower middle classes to the upper classes of London and then of New York, Karim feels frustration because of experiencing a lot of situations when he is discriminated against due to the color of his skin. The young man feels himself to be an Englishman, but he understands that he differs greatly from the other Englishmen, and the peculiarities of his life are based on the concept of the "otherness". Identity as a phenomenon develops during the person's whole life, and Karim's perception of his identity also changed, but it did not acquire the definite form.⁵² From this point, Karim's identity cannot be determined strictly, and it depends on the aspects of the origins, upbringing, and surroundings.

⁵² Mark Stein, "Posed Ethnicity and the Postethnic: Hanif Kureishi's Novels", in *English Literatures in International Contexts*, edited by Heinz Antor and Klaus Stierstorfer (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 2000).

Conclusion

The concept of cultural identity should not be viewed as a static phenomenon or as a fixed set of values that have to be shared by every person belonging to a certain group. Leading scholars such as Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha believe that culture exists only in individual experiences and perceptions of people. These perceptions are changing and they are affected by a variety of factors such educational background, economic status, values and so forth. They can be called context-dependent. The main argument put forward by Hall and Bhabha is that the formation of identity does not follow a universal pattern or formula that can be applied to every person. Moreover, an individual can be influenced by more than one culture and he/she can attempt to reconcile the values of several cultures. These issues are eloquently described by Hanif Kureishi in this novel. It explores the experiences of Karim, a mixed-race adolescent who strives to find a community to which he can fully belong. To some degree, this novel contrasts the experiences first and second-generation immigrants. In particular, the author shows that first-generation immigrants can be driven by the need to achieve economic prosperity; yet, they want to retain their cultural identity at least to some extent. For example, Karim's uncle Anwar is opposed to Western culture. He feels nostalgic about India, but he does not want to return there. In turn, Haroon also feels attached to Buddhism. Thus, first-generation immigrants resist complete assimilation with a foreign culture.

In contrast, second-generation immigrations are more willing to integrate themselves into a new society. They attempt to find meanings in their relations with other people. Karim is torn between two cultures and identities. He views himself mostly as an Englishman, but he acknowledges the fact of his so-called otherness, in part because he is often reminded that he does not fully belong to this community. To a great extent, this behavior can be explained by racist attitudes of many people who are prejudiced against Karim. They cannot fully accept

him. Nevertheless, he remains open to new ideas or values that a new culture can offer. This example is important because it shows that cultural values or norms are not necessarily passed from one generation to another. More likely, they are formed through continuous interaction with parents, peers, or media. Overall, this case supports the thesis that cultural identity is a very dynamic concept that largely depends on individual experiences. Moreover, it shows Stuart Hall's idea of cultural hybridity. One can mention another character of this novel, Jamila. She does not reject her Indian heritage, but it is not decisive for her. More likely, her identity can be defined by her political and social views. She supports feminist ideals because in this way she can reject the values of her father who forced her into marriage. This case supports the ideas expressed by Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha. Cultural identity is not a fix set of values, rules, or norms that exist in every generation. More likely, they tend to transform with time passing. In some cases, second-generation may not be willing to accept norms or values of their parents. In some cases, such behavior can be explained by the fact that some cultures can be perceived as inferior. This is one of the problems that Hanif Kureishi raises in his novel. This literary work illustrates that a person can be forced into conformity by other people. Thus, the formation of cultural identity can be affected by negative forces such as racism.

On the whole, it is possible to argue that cultures cannot exist in the state of isolation. Such an assumption is too simplistic. Contemporary societies are based on continuous interactions of different cultures and their values or norms often have to be reconciled. Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha urge people to acknowledge the complexities of modern culture. In turn, Hanif Kureishi gives readers insights into the experiences of various immigrants who attempt to integrate into a new society. One can also say that there is an increasing need to examine the interactions of several cultures and people's perception of culture. The thing is that in the future, a growing number of people encounter problems similar to those ones

experienced by the characters of Hanif Kureishi's novel. The theories developed by Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha give deep insights into the formation of a person's cultural identity. It is a dynamic process that does not follow any particular pattern. One can say that it is shaped by a variety of forces such as the attitudes of parents, social interactions, or openness to new ideas. A successful interaction of different cultures is possible provided that the society accept the idea of diversity and recognizes the differences between people. Without it, a great number of people can be victimized as it is the case with Karim.

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